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Organization as a Management Variable: A Survey of Nigerian University Libraries in the South South Zone

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Introduction

University libraries are built to supplement and complement effective learning, teaching, and research. The faculty, researchers, students and other members of the university community require up-to-date information to keep abreast of current development in their areas of study, specialization, and responsibility. The Nigerian University Commission (NUC) (2004) has attempted to put quality assurance in place in the Nigerian University system by proposing the Virtual (Digital) Library Project Initiative. The initiative will provide current journals, books, and other information resources. It will enhance access to global information resources. Without adequate organization of library activities, these information resources may not be easily available and accessible for maximum use.

Library organization is essential for the day-to-day operation of the organization. For this reason, the management variable of organizing provides a framework in which people can work happily, productively, and effectively. It involves assigning tasks developed during planning to staff working in different units of the library. It is the way plans are put into action, responsibilities defined, and lines of authority laid down. Edoka (2000) outlines six steps in the process of organizing:

- Identify tasks that must be accomplished to achieve objectives.
- Identify personnel with appropriate knowledge and skills to perform the activities.
- Relate the experience of the personnel to relevant tasks.
- Group work in logically-related and balanced positions.
- Define and delegate responsibility and authority.
- Establish relationship between positions and units to facilitate harmonious teamwork.

Library activities must be classified and then divided into manageable jobs and allocated to staff. An organizational chart facilitates the division of responsibilities into units and co-ordination of the activities of each unit with clear lines of communication. Part of organizing is placing staff in the right place, ensuring that they have jobs where they can do well and be satisfied (Wambugu 2005). Howorka (2005) asserts that organizing helps explains the role each individual plays and their relationship to others in the organization. Handy (1990), Mullins (1993), and Terry (1997) all agree that the organizing function is the process of breaking down tasks into individual assignments and then putting them back together in units or departments, along with a delegation of authority to the supervisor of the unit or department. Organizing consists of people (staff) whose specialized tasks are coordinated to contribute to the organizational goals. Evans (2005) describes organizing as "arranging the activities of an organization in such a way that they systematically contribute to the achievement of the organizational goals."

This study examines the views of university librarians on the influence of organizing on the availability of information sources in the library. The study assumes that the management variable of

organizing is so indispensable that nothing tangible can be achieved without it, especially making information sources available and accessible to users. To guide this study, the hypothesis “Librarians do not regard organizing as a significant influence on the availability of information sources in the university libraries” has been proposed.

Methodology

This study uses a survey design. The population is four federal universities located in the South-South zone of Nigeria, namely:

- University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
- University of Calabar, Cross River State
- University of Port- Harcourt, River State
- University of Benin, Edo State.

The target population for this study was all academic librarians in the libraries of the universities surveyed. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire tagged “Management Variable of Organizing and Information Source Availability (MVOISA).” The questionnaire used a Likert scale with five responses from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and asked respondents to tick the response that is applicable to the statements.

Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

The data collected from the questionnaire was analysed using simple percentages and the hypothesis was tested using the chi-square statistical tool.

Presentation of Data

Data on management variable of organizing as it influenced the availability of information sources in the University libraries are presented in the table below:

Table 1

S/N	Efficient library organization requires	SA4 (%)	A3 (%)	D2(%)	SD1(%)
1.	Arrangement and allocation of tasks to match the level and available personnel	31 (67.39)	15 (32.61)	0 (0)	0 (0)
2.	Regular shelf reading to ensure that information sources are placed in their proper position.	37 (80.44)	9 (19.56)	(9) (0)	0 (0)
3.	Regular re-shelving of information sources to ensure their proper placement	31 (67.39)	12 (26.09)	3 (4.35)	0 (0)
4.	Accurate classification of information sources to ensure their retrieval	27 (58.70)	17 (36.96)	2 (4.35)	0 (0)
5.	Accurate assignment of subject heading to ensure accurate location of needed subject.	27 (58.70)	16 (34.78)	3 (6.52)	0 (0)
6.	Accurate filing of subject entries in the subject catalogue to ensure retrieval of needed subject.	28 (60.87)	14 (30.44)	4 (8.70)	0 (0)

Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage.

The data in Table 1 reflects the opinions of the respondents on the management variable of organizing. The observed figures and relative percentages indicate that most of the academic librarians realize the importance of organizing in making information sources available in the library.

An examination of table 1 reveals academic librarians' responses to the statement "efficient library organization requires arrangement and allocation of task to march the level and available personnel". As indicated in the table, all the 46 (100%) respondents agreed with the statement (consisting of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses). This supports the views of Weihrich and Koont (2005) that organizing requires arrangement and allocation of tasks to match available personnel in order to achieve its institutional objectives. In addition, all respondents also agreed with the statement that "regular shelf reading ensures that information sources are placed in their proper position." This finding is very significant and corroborates the findings of Asuquo (1998) who found that regular shelf reading ensures proper placement of information sources, which enhances information use. This is a healthy situation for the libraries studied, as the librarians have ascertained what to do for effective services. Moreover, in response to the statement "regular re-shelving of information sources ensures their proper placement" only 3 (6.52%) disagreed with the statement, while 43 (93.48%) agreed. However, observation by this researcher reveals that some libraries delay re-shelving. This supports Audu's (1998) observation that some library staff do not achieve prompt shelving and re-shelving of information sources to facilitate the retrieval of information needs by users.

Forty-four (95.65%) agreed with the statement that accurate classification of information sources ensures their retrieval and only two (4.35%) disagreed. Without proper classification of information sources, retrieval will be impossible. In response to the statement that "accurate assignment of subject headings ensures accurate location of needed subject," 43 (93.48%) agreed while 3 (6.52%) did not. A number of authors have stressed the importance of precision in assigning subject headings. Among these are Afolabi (1989) and Aguolu and Aguolu (2002). Responses to the statement that accurate filing of subject entries in the subject catalogue ensures retrieval shows 42 (91.30%) respondents agreed, while 4 (8.70%) disagreed. This indicates that respondents were aware of the importance of the organizing function in making information sources available. This finding is supported by Bryson's (1999) statement that organizing brings together disparate elements for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the library.

Further analysis was use to test the hypothesis, "Librarians do not regard organizing as a significant influence on the availability of information sources in the university libraries."

Table 2

N	X ² cal	X ² cri	Df	Decision at P<0.5	C
46	231.30	11.07	5	Ho rejected	0.99

Key:

N - Number of respondents

X² cal - Chi-square calculated

X² cri - Chi-square critical

Df - Chi-square freedom

Ho - Null hypothesis

C - Contingency co-efficient

The calculated chi-square 231.30 is greater than the table or critical value of 11.07; hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

To test the strength of the influence, the contingency correlation coefficient (C) was calculated to be 0.99, as shown on the table, which is very close to 1.0, and indicates that the influence is strong. It therefore follows that librarians in the population view organizing as a very significant influence on the availability of information sources in university libraries. The organizing variable of management helps the librarian in defining the essential relationship among staff, and assigning tasks and activities so that all the resources of the library are integrated and coordinated to accomplish library's objectives, of acquiring, processing, and disseminating information sources to users.

Conclusion

The principles of organizing supports goal attainment, which will result in availability and accessibility of information sources. It is worthy of recommending that:

- Staff should be allocated tasks according to their qualifications to ensure that they perform their duties well.
- Shelving, re-shelving, and shelf reading must be done at least thrice daily to ensure proper placement of information sources on the shelves.
- Information sources must be well organized in terms of accurate classification, accurate filing of subject entries in the catalogue, and accurate assignment of subject heading to ensure availability of information sources.

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